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THE
SPIRIT OF RESEARCH
AND ITS APPLICATION TO
VIRGINIAN HISTORY.

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THE SPIRIT OF RESEARCH, AND ITS APPLICATION TO VIRGINIAN HISTORY.*

PERHAPS I should preface with a few words, in order to explain the circumstances under which I am present here this evening. At the last annual meeting of the Virginia Association for the Advancement of Higher Education, I read a brief paper urging the collection of material scattered about everywhere throughout the State, but more particularly in connection with our institutions of learning, with a view to having ultimately written a history of the educational, intellectual, literary, and social life of Virginia. At the same time, as preparatory and essential to this work, I stressed the importance of research and independent investigation generally, and particularly in our methods of teaching—*not* so as to make colleges of high schools, and universities of colleges, but leaving each to work within its proper sphere, so as to allow the teacher to be as suggestive and stimulating as possible with the pupils, to implant within them an enthusiasm and desire to work for themselves, to collect material for purposes of their own interest and discovery, and to be observant recorders and faithful interpreters of the truth. It seemed to me that this habit of thought and thinking, and the methodical treatment of a subject with a definite purpose and distinct spirit, were as important aims as the accumulation of detailed facts and principles, whether from teachers' lips or from the pages of text-books.

One of your faculty was kind enough to suggest that,

*A paper read before the Philosophical Society of the University of Virginia, January 16, 1892, by John B. Henneman, M. A., (University of Virginia), Ph. D., (Berlin), Professor of English and History in Hampden-Sidney College.

as an alumnus of the University, on the occasion of a visit, I read an informal paper, in a similar vein, before the Philosophical Society, thinking that, perhaps, we might arouse a fresh interest in an old enough theme, and that a discussion might be productive of some good to those of us participating. I take advantage of the opportunity, therefore, to speak directly and informally and frankly.

In reading this paper, I am not pretending to solve grave problems, still less to impart any fresh information. It is my desire simply to direct your attention and thought to a given channel, to seek and to obtain your opinions, suggestions, and sympathetic criticism.

I feel that our work as teachers can only be vitally effective when the point is clear that each and every one is laboring with a single object in view—to advance the educational and intellectual life of Virginia and whatever sections of the country may be represented in our several institutions. So far from looking with critical eyes upon what is being done towards the great ends of education and of culture, of scholarship and of research, anywhere in the State, I am but too grateful for any interest wherever manifest, believing, only, that this must assume a catholic spirit and be founded upon the broadest basis in order to rise to its full possibilities.

You will understand, therefore, how we teachers of the colleges and schools of the State look instinctively to you gentlemen of the University of Virginia for guidance, for example, and for support.

Your responsibilities and our responsibilities are alike great. There are not too many educational institutions in Virginia. The necessities of the conditions in the near future will demand either more colleges, or the facilities of each and all must become enlarged. By placing together the catalogues of all the Virginian institutions, it will be very easy to calculate how many counties still fail to be repre-

sented by a single youth off at college or university. This is an age of university extension, of the popularization of letters, of public lectures, cheap printing, reading rooms, libraries, and all the laboratory apparatus of intellectual physics. It seems to me that the problem, very nakedly stated, is: Are the advocates of Higher Education in Virginia to utilize this interest and enthusiasm for their own purposes by directing it to noble and the most beneficial ends, or will they allow it to run riot and assume any shape and hue, and assert any manifestation it may chance to find in useless fads?

It seems to me that what we need is combined, systematic work, so that we may husband all the resources and that no useless energy may be expended. In this regard you are particularly fortunate in the extent of your influence at the University. While we of the colleges touch only sections—in my own case principally the Southside, the Southwest, and West Virginia—and necessarily a limited public, you reach every section in the State, every State in the South, and many both West and North. Moreover, your students are both older and further advanced. The leavening process may, too, operate better from above downwards. This is, perhaps, the strongest argument in favor of higher education even among the wildest enthusiasts for free and common schools. The educated aristocracy, *i. e.* the best teachers, must make the first move and direct the progress of this thought.

With influences irradiating from this central point dominant in philology, mathematics, the sciences, engineering, medicine, and the law—and with an eye impelled towards independent investigation and original research, your possibilities and your opportunities are boundless.

It is cheering and inspiring for the student to use the text-book and notes of his own professor, the material which that professor has evolved out of his greater ex-

perience and constant study and reflection. The work of that particular instructor is rendered doubly effective; the personality is both reached and impressed. But may not the teacher find means in some way to advance a step farther? Cannot the pupil be given a peep into the teacher's intellectual workshop, and be shown *how* these results are accumulated, just how the tools are handled to produce these works—even apart from the cunning, which, I grant, is inherent in every workman and indicative of his individual skill? In addition to imparting facts and results and insisting on the accumulation of details—all perfectly good so far as it goes—may not more be done in indicating methods, suggesting the *what* and the *how*: what is still left and waiting to be worked up, and how it could be reached and accomplished with the best possible results? May we produce not only work and workers, but also *workmen*?

I have been literally filled with amazement that so many first-class men with bright intellects and keen interests work without all method; or, even after getting up text-books, have so inadequate a conception of the proper value of their accumulations; knowing virtually nothing as to the manner of gathering testimony, the nature of evidence, the treatment of facts necessary to form an induction, the independent classification and correlation of details.

I speak here purposely from my own experience, because I feel that this course will be worth more to myself and be more worthy of your own attention and consideration.

I have tried to explain to my classes the method of keeping various ledgers and note-books for given subjects, alphabetically divided and arranged, ready for the insertion of any fact or detail under its proper head. I have attempted to impress that it is important thus to save the

scraps of information which one is constantly running across, and which otherwise soon go astray and are forgotten; to preserve the ^{su}casual and transitory thoughts and suggestions, often most valuable and trustworthy because spontaneous, and seldom or never to be recalled with the same force.

I do not advise scrap-books, for they are necessarily without much system and preconceived order, and the pasting in may consume both valuable time and labor. But a scrap-box is different. Into it may be thrown all sorts of clippings and notes, to be afterwards more definitely assorted and arranged as to subjects and subdivisions, discarding worthless and extraneous matter, and bringing into use other boxes as both material and details accumulate. Or, just as the largest libraries are catalogued, one may have a collection of cards or paper slips, and jot down each point and reference and observation on card or slip, which is afterwards placed in proper position and correlation.

I know that the student will at first waste much, err much, select of all things just that which he may not need, will find much valueless stuff in his collections. But this is an argument in favor of such a system. The habits of observation and attention are formed; and taste, discrimination and judgment are to be trained only by constant exercise, or, as Matthew Arnold happily expresses it, by "playing freely about the facts."

I am aware that we have encyclopædias, just as we have professors. Even if they served the purpose—and, of course, they cannot—they do not teach the student how to work for himself, how to arrive at inductions and deduce other conclusions therefrom. The same principles are involved as in the application of the physical sciences, a view is gained of the subject as a whole, a philosophic grasp taken with proper insight into the development and the fitting together of the several parts.

A scholar writes out of the great experience of a lifetime, or from a full note-book. These beget the inspiration and the suggestive thought. In looking over his collections new possibilities are observed, unsuspected material is at hand for an essay, for an address, for a magazine article, for a treatise, or even a greater work.

But another point of view. There is much to be gained merely from concentration on some subject of interest, in addition to and outside of regular every-day work. It is strengthening to the mind to keep it constantly directed to a definite end and employed on a stated subject, despite the many temporary diversions it necessarily receives. It is surprising how much one finds when on the constant lookout for matter. Facts and thoughts which escape the ordinary observer, and would pass by the investigator himself unnoticed but for this unusual interest, are readily caught and preserved.

Permit me to quote here the late Mr. Lowell: "There is nothing less profitable than scholarship for the mere sake of scholarship, nor anything more wearisome in the attainment. But the moment you have a definite aim, attention is quickened—the mother of memory—and all that you acquire groups and arranges itself in an order that is lucid, because everywhere and always it is in intelligent relation to a central object of constant and growing interest. This method also forces upon us the necessity of thinking, which is, after all, the highest result of all education."

To what extent the German Seminar may be reproduced in methods of teaching, as supplementary to lectures, is a question for each professor to decide for himself, looking at all the elements entering into the conditions of his surroundings. While some objection may be made to a few of the detailed features, the idea is a most fruitful one. A very modified form is that of giving references and requir-

ing parallel readings connected closely and vitally with the subject, and demanding reports on the same, written or oral, systematized and arranged. To inspire a wide-awake youth to become sufficiently interested to work for himself, to superintend his efforts, to guide him in choice of subject and by judicious criticism possibly as to result, tracing knowledge to its ultimate source, is truly a worthy and noble work for both instructed and instructor.

If I understand the principles of your Philosophical Society aright, this is, itself, a kind of Seminar. Would that the time were also ripe and the pecuniary conditions feasible for a University of Virginia studies, and periodical circulars, and scientific journals—to be supported by your own work and that of your students, both those in residence and the graduates teaching in the various colleges and schools throughout the State and country! Would that the combined effort of the State of Virginia might support a distinctively literary periodical and a State historical organ! I do not forget—and I congratulate you—that for several years the University has supported an *Annals of Mathematics*. When a University of Virginia graduate abroad may point to such journals as this as evidence of the spirit pervading his *alma mater* in intellectual aspiration, he may hope that she will be rated at her true worth the world over. Rightly or wrongly, it is the only evidence which our foreign friends will accept. When the spirit is present, they naturally demand the manifestations.

Finally, to come to the heart of the matter in this discussion of Virginian relative non-productiveness, the greatest need everywhere in the State and with every institution is increased library facilities. A well-stocked library is the *sine qua non* of all independent work. Not only this, but there seems to exist a positive disinclination among students to use the libraries, limited as these may be, as they

could and ought. I find the one thing difficult is to get pupils to go to libraries to search out their own material. This is the training which they lack and need. They are too busy, they say, by some strange perverseness, instead of being busy just through their library work and references, sent thither constantly by the needs of daily recitations, examinations, and general work. I confess with shame much the same feeling while a student at the University. In one of my sessions, the statement was made in the UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE that barely a third of the students had taken a book out of the library from October to June. I was among this third, I can truthfully add; but I should be heartily opposed to the Librarian looking back over the records to observe how few these books were and just what was their general character.

The value of the library, as a factor in education, is becoming universally recognized. All research is handicapped under our present conditions, while library facilities are so meagre. Funds are needed everywhere, so that each Professor may be constantly adding the most necessary books in his department, to which he may continually refer and send his pupils, and thereby render at least the bibliography and history of the subject intelligible.

Allow me to indicate, just for the moment, what I have been attempting under my own very restricted conditions. Within the past year the libraries of the two literary societies have been added to that of the college, placing at the disposal of my classes from eight to ten thousand miscellaneous volumes, in addition to the independent and very valuable collections belonging to the neighboring Theological Seminary. I have been getting these books arranged according to subjects—fiction, drama, poetry, biography, travel, history, etc.—in convenient alcoves and cases, so that the student may recognize at a glance what he possesses and may use. I have endeavored to interest

a class especially in Virginian history and traditions, by delivering during the entire session a weekly lecture upon the History of Virginian Education and Literary Effort. To insure their co-operation and attention, I have organized them for the nonce into a Hampden-Sidney Historical Society to pry into and glean all the details they may be able to find respecting their local history. I further assigned each a definite topic upon which to report. I was much interested, therefore, in placing apart all the volumes and pamphlets, some four or five hundred in number, which bore in any way upon Virginia, her history and her people, my purpose being to make this division a running commentary and illustration of my remarks. I have found the collection so valuable that I expect to get my students to make a complete list thereof and publish, if nowhere else, at least in the college magazine, so that these books may be placed on record both for my own classes and for the guidance of any future worker in the field. How much relieved my own investigations on this subject would be, if I could but know the similar contents of every library in the State. Think of having accessible a list of all books in this State relative to Virginia's life! Perhaps a Bureau of Education or Legislative Bill will some day effect this, if not some public spirited Maecenas.

If even our libraries, limited as they are, were but carefully arranged and catalogued according to subjects, with authors' index and other side references, and these were printed, or at least made generally and easily accessible, a student or investigator might then know whether it were worth his while to spend one or two weeks or even a few days to consult such and such volumes, which he knew definitely were to be secured. And certainly every local student could work better with his material carefully classified at his finger tips.

Virginian students are further fortunately situated in that they are relatively near and convenient to the great collections of books in Washington and in Baltimore. None of our institutions can act up to its possibilities until it makes the most of its advantages, and presents its facilities in the least restricted and best systematized shape. Of the libraries in the State which I have visited and examined, that of the Washington and Lee University and of the Theological Seminary at Hampden-Sidney seem to me the most neat, happy, and effective in their arrangement.

Perhaps it may be considered visionary and utterly impracticable to advance further and speak of a rational system of exchange between neighboring educational institutions in the same or even in different states. And yet England is thus liberal! and books may be transmitted to different points on the continent to special investigators. I have even heard that some of our sister institutions North adopt a similar liberal policy. This might bring us to realize a little more clearly that we are all, everywhere in the State and country, working with one great end in view—to advance the culture and intellectual growth of the nation. To indicate how very far we are from this ideal condition at present, it will be sufficient to note that a law—if I have been rightly informed—observed or not, technically prevents a book belonging to the University from being taken even off University premises. If libraries are intended for any purpose, they are to be used; as well as to be places for ornaments and bric-a-brac, and for dancing Germans.

In this presence one may quote the name and opinions of Thomas Jefferson on educational matters with all due respect and seriousness. The system of education which he developed and advocated anticipated many of our modern theories by near a century. Going to the continent of Europe for much of his inspiration, he combined the best

foreign thought and methods with due regard for the different conditions in the new world. Scores of years later some of our more Northern institutions, seeking the same sources, returned home with similar ideas, and proclaimed to the American world as a fresh discovery what was only a renewed inspiration. Mr. Jefferson not only had a place for the common and high schools, colleges, and his central State University, in his educational system, but in at least one of his propositions he advocated, fourth and last, a *Library*. This stood for not simply advanced and higher work; it signified especially reading and private research and personal investigation as the crowning point of all scholarship.

No one library in the State corresponds perfectly to this description. The State Library in the Capitol at Richmond is far more valuable than many suppose. One is constantly lighting upon rare old books with distinct value to the antiquarian and historical investigator, which have never found their way into the imperfect records. But it occupies at present a very limited space, is poorly housed and shelved, and as a consequence badly arranged and still worse catalogued. This is imputing no fault to the officers in charge; it is simply a mathematical problem of limitations. [I am happy to note that a bill has just been referred to the appropriate committee in the present legislature for the erection of a commodious and fire-proof home for these treasures of the State.]

Much the same may be said of your library here, if you will allow me to speak *entre nous*, as an alumnus and well-wisher of the University. Looking at my own department I am pleased to see many of the books on the study of English philology brought together upon neighboring shelves. There only remains that the works in English and American literature should receive the same generous treatment. The recent gift of a few thousand volumes would be far more serviceable, not by remaining in lodg-

ings where, to examine the contents, one must get down on all fours and perform sundry acrobatic feats, but by distribution of the various works it contains into the proper apartments of philology, science, history, literature, etc., where they belong. I am rejoiced to hear of this bequest. I have the feeling that a well-equipped, well arranged, and well used library is worth to an institution two or three additional chairs. It is in itself a post-graduate course to anyone in any line for all time. I frankly long for the day when our wealthy citizens may leave money to be expended for this purpose, as well as for founding new institutions and for creating new professorships. We need the chairs which we already have, and new ones too, to be rendered as efficacious as possible.

That in these illustrations I have been naturally thinking more of my own two departments, English and History, you will pardon. It is best that I speak wholly from personal experience and personal needs.

As intimated before, I have been attempting to get my pupils and others interested in the collection of material scattered all throughout the State and the South—in Virginian historical and literary traditions. It has been an almost entirely neglected field in our educational institutions, so far as any systematic work has been attempted. The subject, further, appeals to the patriotism, the college enthusiasm, the local feelings of the student. It is in consonance with the great interest manifested everywhere in the study of American history and institutions. The study of the history of Virginia, too, has great importance in itself, being second to that of no State in value, and surpassing most. Above all, the inductive methods of philosophic research are clearly exemplified and practised: how to use books, examine libraries, gather details, compile notes, sift material, and draw conclusions. I am not willing to have it urged that the painful collection of data is not the work of a scholar. If scholars are not willing

to do this, pray, who will? And we cannot hope to generalize with any degree of assurance until the heaps of evidence are first piled up and the working material lies at hand.

No scrap of information is too insignificant for these purposes, for preservation in local libraries. Every shred of the intellectual and social life is worth saving. No fact and circumstance is too slight to be cast aside. In every county, in each community, may be found and sketched certain traditions and local colorings—the elements (often neglected and usually overlooked) in which consist the real being of the State, and whereby a true picture of the life of the people, of their culture, their habit of thought, their latent power and inherent force, may be obtained. From a close study of old newspaper advertisements alone, the economical and social life of the past may be almost reconstructed.

It is not too early to be looking into our environment and analyzing our conditions. Much valuable material is continually being destroyed. Just this past summer a sad case came too late to my notice. Barrels and boxes full of papers and pamphlets, many relating to Hampden-Sidney, and nearly all, in one way or other, to the State, the accumulations of a life-time on the part of a venerable and indefatigable reader and collector, were, forsooth, piously burned by the female portion of the household because this "trash" had always been in the way, and they were now going to move in a new dwelling. And yet, there were two libraries a hundred yards away, either of which should have been grateful to have received, assorted, and preserved these documents. More lamentable instances and greater losses than this, I have no doubt, could readily be recorded.

Can any one wonder that little history and little literature has proceeded from a people who have such little re-

gard for "trifles?" and, I fear, the indictment is more or less just against the people of the entire South.

There is hardly need here for suggesting the number of monographs that might easily be written. Local students might offer valuable contributions to the State's educational history; the young theologian would find a rich and suggestive field in the theological controversy and religious experience of the past; the interested scientist could devote no little consideration to the analysis of the contributions to his own department of thought; many others could examine the political activity, the social features, the economical conditions, everywhere manifest in Virginian life. Each of these headings is a theme not simply for chapter, but for a volume. It is virtually an untouched field, so limitless are its resources. Men have labored for the State and seem in danger of being forgotten, whose memory, had they lived in other sections, might have been kept green, through memoirs and biographies dedicated to their lives and deeds. I am indebted to a suggestion in the selections from Dr. Boccock's writings, that alone to write the history of Virginia's judges and attorney-generals, great lawyers and great teachers of the law, would be as magnificent an undertaking as that noble work entitled Campbell's Lives of the Lord Chancellors of England. The history of Virginian journalism, the scientific and professional interests, the military and naval achievements, the personal adventures—all furnish material. Even Henry Cabot Lodge's manufactured statistics in the September *Century* awards Virginia the palm in statesmen and pioneers. The real history of the University of Virginia and every literary institute in the State is still to be written. The treatises of Prof. Adams and others on this subject merely indicate the way and suggest what might be accomplished.

If I may be allowed to pass a criticism upon Dr. Thomas Nelson Page's recent article in the December *Lippincott*

on literature in the South since the war, it is not conceived upon sufficiently a broad basis, but is taken up altogether too much with considerations of his own department, viz. *fiction*. The South has a past, and it is natural that her writers linger with tender and loving remembrance upon its glories and its beauties. It is the *romantic* element present in fiction—just as in the conditions which produced Scott's Border Romances. This is one phase, and it is finding beautiful and worthy expression; the expression of purity, tenderness, and nobility; of ideals lost but still cherished. But it is only one phase in the complexity of Virginian intellectual activity. There are glimpses of much serious work being done in the South and in Virginia apart from mere fiction—in letters, in science, in philosophic thought, in professional life, to indicate that there is likewise a present and a future, and a scholarship among educated men endeavoring to face these responsibilities.

Dr. Page himself is advertised in the prospectus of the *Atlantic Monthly* for 1892 to furnish two critical articles on Philip Pendleton Cooke and John Esten Cooke. So Professor Trent, of the University of the South, is correcting at the present moment the proof-sheets of his Life of Simms for the American Men of Letters' Series. These are two glorious opportunities for Virginians, discussing Virginian and Southern writers and conditions, to appear in a serious and critical role before the most exclusive and fastidious of Bostonian literary publics. I have both the hope and the conviction that these two gentlemen realize their golden opportunity and will accordingly grasp it.

I believe that the extension of *research* means an increase in interest all along the line in every department of intellectual work. It augurs the era of a revival in both scientific and literary effort. I do not think the spirit of the two contradictory. They often go hand in hand in an age, in a time, if not in an individual. The awakening of mind

is the sole condition, as in the case of the New Learning preceding and leading up to the Elizabethan Renaissance. This one may devote himself to the science and that one to the art, but there is enough material to satisfy both conditions, enough workers to accommodate both the sciences and the arts.

I am loth to yield too much to climatic conditions and the natural indolence of Southern youth. That would be a total begging of the question. I believe we have energy enough expended and wasted. We wish to create a congenial atmosphere, and direct this energy to a right apprehension and proper conservation of its powers. Please understand me. I am in no sense decrying our work in the past or even at present. I recognize its great good. But teachers should be constantly questioning their conditions and demanding: Can this work be rendered even more effective? Can these opportunities be made more vitally telling?

A natural optimism almost persuades one that the circumstances are ripe. The State is expanding in a many-sided activity, engaging no longer in a struggle against odds, nor maintaining a defensive attitude in thought and feeling. She is stirring and feeling herself. She is conscious. The nucleus of public libraries is being started, systems of public lectures organized at many of our institutions, and in our larger towns and cities. As these increase in population and opportunity, literary clubs and social organizations are being everywhere formed. The possibilities of modern city life means development along many lines. All the signs point to new evolutions, and, I am inclined to think, to increased interest in culture, in the rarer heights of intellect, spirit, and social instinct. The commercial swing of the day need not disturb too much these calculations. It ought to be merely the basis of and transition to better things and greater opportunities to those in whom the University has already instilled a love for the noblest and the highest.

The universities and colleges which guide the young men of today, who are the instigators of these movements tomorrow, have opportunities to affect deeply, if not to control, and direct this movement. Most of the young men prominent in these scientific, literary, historical, and social gatherings are old students of the University. They are unquestionably acting in the full belief and persuasion that they are advancing the cause in which they are enlisted. But I have often wondered whether the direct incentive was received here at the proper time, while students, or whether these manifestations and interests are but afterthoughts, and later and independent developments.

Social and economical considerations throughout the entire country—and the same is true of this State—will prevent there ever being any one exclusive centre, and it is best that this should be so for many reasons. But the city of Richmond, with its historic and social traditions, and the State University with its high ideals and undisputed prestige must always command leading recognition in Virginia.

The young Virginian is no longer absorbed exclusively in politics. He is a scientist, an artist, a *litterateur*, he is many things besides—even a baseball player and master of the tennis racket, bicyclist, oarsman, and high-kicker on the football eleven. All this is encouraging. It means a widening of range and capabilities in matters hitherto too much put aside and neglected. May not more of them become, too, investigators, patient toilers and seekers after light and truth?

I close with a sentence culled from a letter of Professor Stone's, to whose kindness and hospitality is due my presence here this evening: "Research is the key-note to all future progress in Higher Education in Virginia"—and I take it that this means research as adapted to Virginian conditions, as favored by Virginian opportunities, as limited by Virginian circumstances, as applied to Virginian students.

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